

FACTORS AFFECTING EMERGENCY MEDICINE RESIDENCY WELLNESS

Lori Weichenthal, MD and Sarah McCullough, MD; University Medical Center, Department of Emergency Medicine, Fresno CA

STUDY OBJECTIVES

To determine the frequency of factors thought to be detrimental to resident wellness and the frequency of symptoms that indicate burnout in Emergency Medicine residents.

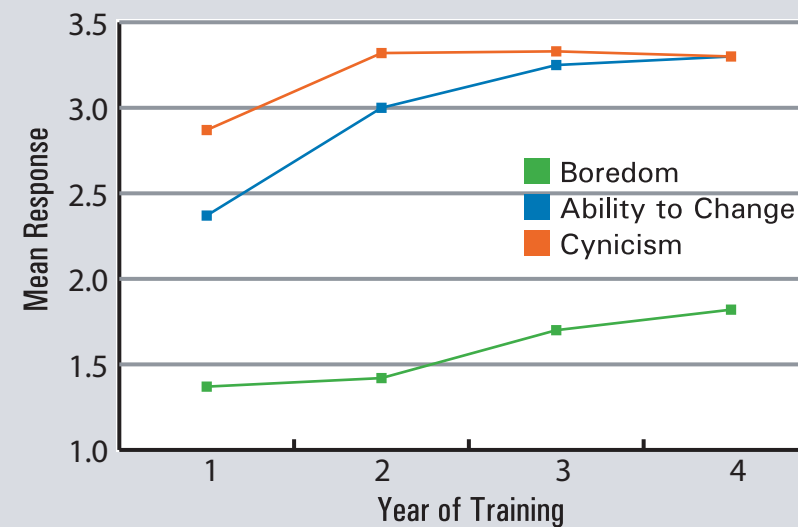
METHODS

This study was a prospective, cross-sectional survey distributed to all accredited Emergency Medicine residencies in the United States in November of 2001. The survey included five demographic questions, fifteen questions adapted from established burnout surveys, and ten questions specific to Emergency Medicine residents. Data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and later imported into SPSS for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics and response frequencies were calculated, and responses were analyzed as a function of level of training using ANOVA.

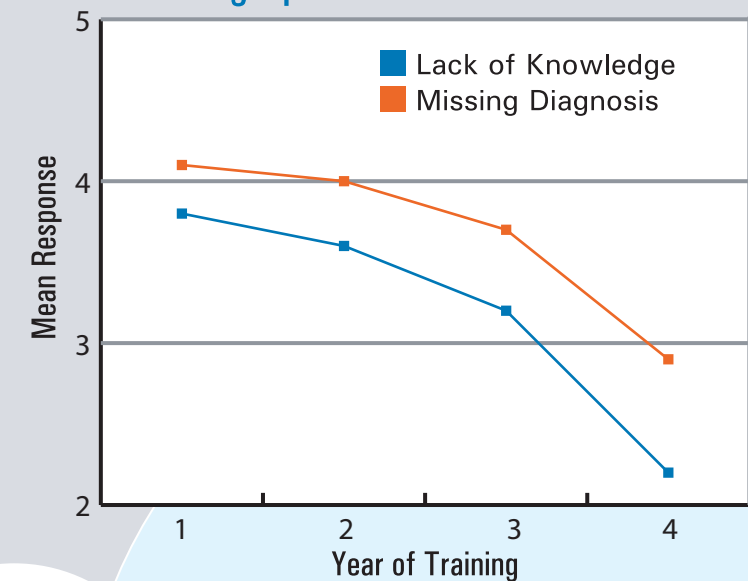
RESULTS

55 residencies returned surveys (44%). Of the residencies who returned surveys, there was a potential for 1469 participants. 663 surveys were actually returned (45%). 61% of respondents were male. 72% described themselves as Caucasian. The mean burnout score, on a six point scale (0 = no burnout, 6 = substantial burnout) was 2.11. There was no difference in overall burnout by level of training. However, three major burnout indicators, a sense of boredom ($p=0.031$), a feeling of lack of control over the work environment ($p=0.010$), and a development of unhealthy cynicism ($p<0.005$), increased significantly with increasing level of training. Other factors that negatively impacted residents sense of well being included fears of lack of knowledge (mean = 3.48) and fears of missing important diagnoses (mean = 3.87). Junior residents were more likely to affirm these fears ($p<0.005$ for both questions).

Response to Key Burnout Question



Training Specific Concerns



CONCLUSION

Emergency Medicine residents reported a low overall degree of burnout. However, some concerning symptoms of burnout were reported with increasing frequency, with increasing level of training. Conversely, junior residents expressed more fear of the lack of knowledge and skill than their more senior counterparts. Residency wellness curriculums should focus on these areas.